

AN INCURSION INTO DIPLOMACY.

BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

I have long owed a full statement to a number of my countrymen, who once trusted me unreservedly with a considerable sum of money, as to how this money was spent. The occasion was in January of 1902, when, through the columns of the "Times," I appealed for funds to enable me to publish and distribute abroad, in the different languages of Europe, a simple and direct statement of the British case in the Boer War, and an answer to those charges of inhumanity against our soldiers which were rife upon the Continent. Those charges, if left unfuted, were not only a stain upon our national repute, but were also a very grave practical danger, for they inclined a large body of the public in each country towards a moral sympathy with the Boers which greatly strengthened their position. There was even reason to fear that such sympathy might at last translate itself into action, and that, carried away by the feelings of their people, and encouraged possibly by some transitory Boer success, intervention from abroad might even at the eleventh hour throw oil on the dying flames. It was this obvious danger which caused me to embark upon a small unauthorized incursion into amateur diplomacy.

In the first place, let me apologize if I tell the narrative in a personal way. I know no other way to tell it, since I was both the originator and, in conjunction with Mr. Reginald J. Smith, the carrier out of the idea. But let me hasten to say that I am fully aware that there are many who could have done the work with greater authority and with higher literary skill. The only qualifications which I could urge were the negative ones, that I was not connected either with the Government or

with the Army, and that therefore I could in no way be represented as a mere official mouthpiece. Against me was the fact that I was best known as a writer of fiction, a personal argument which was freely used both abroad and at home. However, if one always waited for the ideal man to come along, nothing would ever get done; so I fell back upon the excuse that the thing needed doing, and that, however imperfectly I did it, it was none the less to the best of my power.

How well I can remember the inception of my enterprise! The date was January 7, 1902. The day was a Tuesday. Sir Henry Thompson was holding that evening one of those charming "octave" dinners at which it was my occasional privilege to attend, and I was going up to town from Hindhead to keep the engagement. Sitting alone in a carriage I read the foreign correspondence of the "Times." In a single column there were accounts of meetings in all parts of Europe—notably one of some hundreds of Rhineland clergymen—protesting against our brutalities to our enemies. There followed a whole column of extracts from foreign papers, with grotesque descriptions of our barbarities. To any one who knew the easygoing British soldier or the character of his leaders the thing was unspeakably absurd; and yet, as I laid down the paper and thought the matter over, I could not but admit that these Continental people were acting under a generous and unselfish motive which was much to their credit. How could they help believing these things, and, believing them, was it not their duty by meeting, by article, by any means, to denounce them? Could we accuse them of being credulous? Would we not be equally so if all our

accounts of any transaction came from one side, and were supported by such journalists and, above all, such artists as lent their pens and pencils, whether venally or not, to the Boer cause? Of course we would. And whose fault was it that our side of the question was not equally laid before the jury of the civilized world? Perhaps we were too proud, perhaps we were too negligent; but the fact was obvious that judgment was being given against us by default. How could they know our case? Where could they find it? If I were asked what document they could consult, what would I answer? Blue-books and State papers are not for the multitude. There were books like Fitz-Patrick's "Transvaal from Within" or E. T. Cook's "Rights and Wrongs"; but these were expensive volumes, and not readily translated. Nowhere could be found a statement which covered the whole ground in a simple fashion. Why didn't some Briton draw it up? And then, like a bullet through my head, came the thought, "Why don't you draw it up yourself?"

The next instant I was on fire with the idea. Never in my life have I been so conscious of a direct imperative call which drove every other thought from the mind. If I were a humble advocate, it was all the better, since I could have no axe to grind. I was fairly well posted in the facts already, as I had written an interim history of the war. I had seen something of the campaign, and possessed many documents which bore upon the matter. My plans widened every instant. I would raise money from the public, and by the sale of the book at home. With this I would translate it into every language. These translations should be given away wholesale. Every professor, every clergyman, every journalist, every politician, should have one put under his nose in his own language. In future, if they traduced us, they

could no longer plead ignorance that there was another side to the question. Before I reached London all my programme was sketched out in my head. There was no item of it, I may add, which was not eventually carried through.

Fortune was my friend. I have said that I was dining that night with Sir Henry Thompson. My neighbor at dinner was a gentleman whose name I had not caught. My mind being full of the one idea, my talk soon came round to it, and instead of my neighbor being bored, my remarks were received with a courteous and sympathetic attention which caused me to make even greater demands upon his patience. Having listened from the soup to the savory (often has my conscience rebuked me since), he ended by asking me mildly how I proposed to raise the money for these wide-reaching schemes. I answered that I would appeal to the public. He asked he how much would suffice. I answered that I could make a start with a thousand pounds. He remarked that it would take much more than that. "However," he added, "if a thousand pounds would go any way towards it, I have no doubt that sum could be got for you." "From whom?" I asked. He gave me his name and address and said, "I have no doubt that, if you carry out the scheme on the lines you suggest, I could get the money. When you have done your work, come to me, and we will see how it is best to proceed." I promised to do so, and thanked him for his encouragement.

This was my first stroke of good luck. A second came next morning. I had occasion to call upon the publishing house of Smith, Elder & Co. over some other business, and during the interview I told Mr. Reginald Smith the plan that I had formed. Without a moment's hesitation he placed the whole machinery of his world-wide business

at my disposal, without payment of any kind. From that moment he became my partner in the enterprise, and I found his counsel at every stage of as great help to me as the publishing services which he so generously rendered. Not only did he save heavy costs to the fund, but he arranged easily and successfully those complex foreign transactions which the scheme entailed.

That morning I called at the War Office and was referred by them to the Intelligence Department, where every information which they possessed was freely put at my disposal. I then wrote to the "Times" explaining what it was that I was trying to do, and asking those who sympathized with my object to lend me their aid. Never was an appeal more generously or rapidly answered. My morning post upon the day after brought me a hundred and twenty-seven letters, nearly all of which contained sums drawn from every class of the community, and varying from the fifty pounds of an ex-premier to the half-crown of the widow of a private soldier. Most of the remittances were accompanied by letters which showed that, however, they might pretend in public to disregard it, the attitude of the foreign critics had really left a deep and bitter feeling in the hearts of our people.

It was on January 9 that I was able to begin my task. Upon the 17th I had finished it. When the amount of matter is considered, and the number of researches and verifications which it entailed, I need not say that I had been absorbed by the work, and devoted, I dare say, sixteen hours a day to its accomplishment. So far as possible I kept my individual opinions in the background, and made a more effective case by marshalling the statements of eye-witnesses, many of them Boers, on the various questions of farm-burnings, outrages, concentration camps, and other contentious subjects. I made the

comments as simple and as short as I could, while as to the accuracy of my facts, I may say that, save as to the exact number of farmhouses burned, I have never heard of one which has been seriously questioned. It was a glad day for me when I was able to lay down my pen with the feeling that my statement was as full and as effective as it was in me to make it.

Meanwhile the subscriptions had still come steadily in, until nearly a thousand pounds had been banked by the time that the booklet was finished. The greater number of contributions were in small sums from people who could ill afford it. Among all the great ground landlords of London, drawing their huge unearned increments, I cannot trace one who supported an attempt to state his country's case, while my desk was filled with the postal orders of humble citizens. One notable feature was the number of governesses and others residing abroad whose lives had been embittered by their inability to answer the slanders which were daily uttered in their presence. Many of these sent their small donations. A second pleasing feature was the number of foreigners resident in England who supported my scheme, in the hope that it would aid their own people to form a juster view. From Norwegians alone I received nearly fifty pounds with this object. If Britain's own children too often betrayed her at a crisis of her fate, she found at least warm friends among the strangers within her gates. Another point worth noting was that a disproportionate sum was from clergymen, which was explained by several of them as due to the fact that since the war began they had been pestered by anti-national literature, and took this means of protesting against it.

The proofs having been printed, I sent them to my chance acquaintance, as I had promised, and presently received an invitation to see him. He

expressed his approval of the work, and handed me a banknote for £500, at the same time explaining that the money did not come from him. I asked if I might acknowledge it as from an anonymous donor—"The donor would not object," said my friend. So I was able to head my list with "A Loyal Briton," who contributed £500, but even now I have been unable to obtain permission to publish the name of this generous donor.

By this time the banking account had risen to some two thousand pounds, and we were in a position to put our foreign translations in hand. The British edition had in the meantime been published, the distribution being placed in the hands of Messrs. Newnes, who gave the enterprise whole-hearted aid. The book was retailed at sixpence, but as it was our desire that the sale should be pushed it was sold to the trade at about threepence. The result was to leave the main profit of the enterprise in the hands of the retailer. The sale of the pamphlet was very large—in fact, I should imagine that it approached a record in the time. Some 250,000 copies were sold in Great Britain very quickly, and about 300,000 within a couple of months. This great sale enabled us to add considerably to the fund by the accumulation of the small rebate which had been reserved upon each copy. Our financial position was very strong, therefore, in dealing with the foreign translations.

The French edition was prepared by Professor Sumichrast of Harvard University, who is a French-Canadian by birth. This gentleman patriotically refused to take any payment for his work, which was admirably done. It was published without difficulty by Galignani, and several thousands were given away where they would do most good, in France, Belgium, and Switzerland, while 20,000 copies of this edition were printed.

The German edition was a more difficult matter. No German publisher would undertake it, and the only courtesy which we met with in that country was from Baron von Tauchnitz, who included the volume in his well-known English library. Our advances were met with coldness, and occasionally with insult. Here for example is a copy of an extreme specimen of the kind of letter received.

January, 1902.

Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.

Gent.—Doyle's book makes the impression as if it was ordered or influenced by the English Jingo party.

Now, you know, this English war party (as well as the English officers and soldiers in Transvaal) are contemptible by the whole civilized world as coward scoundrels and vile brutes who murder women and children.

It would be for me, as an importer of English literature to Germany, Austria and Russia, in the highest degree imprudent to do anything that could awake the suspicion I was in connection with so despicable a party.

I have shown your letter to several persons. Nobody was inclined to take up the matter.

There is a mixture of venom and smugness about this epistle which gives it a high place in our collection. In spite of rebuffs, however, we found an Anglo-German publishing house in Berlin to undertake the work, and with the assistance of Herr Curt von Musgrave, who gave us an excellent translation, we were able to work off more than one very large edition, which had a perceptible effect in modifying the tone of that portion of the German press which was open to reason. Altogether 20,000 copies were distributed in the Fatherland and German-speaking Austria.

I remember one whimsical incident at this time. Somewhat tired, after the book was in the press, I went down to Seaford for a rest. While there, a mes-

sage reached me that a Pan-German officer of Landwehr had come over to London, and desired to see me. I wired that I could not come up, but that I should be happy to see him if he came down. Down he came accordingly, a fine upstanding, soldierly man, speaking excellent English. The German proofs had passed through his hands, and he was much distressed by the way in which I had spoken of the hostility which his countrymen had shown us, and its effect upon our feelings towards them. We sat all day and argued the question out. His great point, as a Pan-German, was that some day both Germany and Britain would have to fight Russia—Britain for India, and Germany perhaps for the Baltic Provinces. Therefore they should keep in close touch with each other. I assured him that at the time the feeling in this country was much more bitter against Germany than against Russia. He doubted it. I suggested as a test that he should try the question upon any 'bus driver in London as a fair index of popular opinion. He was very anxious that I should modify certain paragraphs, and I was equally determined not to do so, as I was convinced they were true. Finally, when he left me on his return to London he said, "Well, I have come 800 miles to see you, and I ask you now as a final request that in the translation you will allow the one word "*Leider*" ("*Alas*") to be put at the opening of that paragraph." I was perfectly ready to agree to this. So he got one word in exchange for 1600 miles of travel, and I think it was a very sporting venture.

One charming incident connected with this German translation was that a small group of Swiss (and in no country had we such warm-hearted friends as among the minority in Switzerland) were so keen upon the cause that they had a translation and an edition of their own, with large print and maps. It

was published independently at Zurich, Dr. Angst, the British Consul in that town, helping to organize it. The fair-minded and public-spirited gentlemen who put the matter through were Reinhold Ruegg, Colonel Affolter of the Artillery, Professor Haab, State-Secretary Keller, Dr. Rohrer, Professor Schinz, and Robert Schwarzenbach-Zeuner. Amongst other good friends who worked hard for the truth, and exposed themselves to much obloquy in doing so, were Professor Naville, the eminent Egyptologist of Geneva, and Monsieur Tallichet, the well-known editor of the "*Bibliothèque Universelle*" of Lausanne, who sacrificed the circulation of his old-established magazine in upholding our cause.

So much for the French and German editions. The American and Canadian had arranged themselves. There remained the Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Hungarian, and Russian, all of which were rapidly prepared and circulated without a hitch, save that in the case of the Russian, which was published at Odessa, the Censor suppressed it at the last instant. We were successful, however, in getting his veto removed. In each of these countries several thousands of the booklet were given away. In every case we found a larger sale for these foreign editions than we expected, arising no doubt from the eagerness of English residents abroad to make their neighbors understand our position.

The Dutch edition was a stumbling-block. This gallant little nation felt a most natural sympathy for their kinsfolk in arms against us, and honestly believed that they had been very badly used. We should certainly have felt the same. The result was that we were entirely unable to find either publisher or distributor. The greater the opposition the more obvious was the need for the book, so Mr. Reginald Smith arranged that a large edition should be

printed here, and sent direct to all leaders of Dutch opinion. I believe that out of some 5000 copies not more than twenty were sent back to us.

The Norwegian edition also presented some difficulties, which were overcome by the assistance of Mr. Thomassen of the "Verdensgang." This gentleman's paper was entirely opposed to us, but in the interests of fair play he helped me to get my book before the public. I hope that some relaxation in his attitude towards us in his paper may have been due to a fuller comprehension of our case, and a realization of the fact that a nation does not make great sacrifices extending over years for an ignoble cause. One other incident in connection with the Norwegian edition is pleasant for me to recall. I had prefaced each Continental version with a special fore-word, designed to arrest the attention of the particular people whom I was addressing. In this case, when the book was going to press in Christiania, the preface had not arrived from the translator (the accomplished Madame Brockmann), and as she lived a hundred miles off, with all the passes blocked by a phenomenal snow-storm, it looked as if it must be omitted. Finally, however, my short address to the Scandinavian people was heliographed across from snow-peak to snow-peak, and so found its way to the book.

There was one other language into which the book needed to be translated, and that was the Welsh, for the vernacular press of the Principality was almost entirely pro-Boer, and the Welsh people had the most distorted information as to the cause for which their fellow countrymen fought so bravely in the field. The translation was done by Mr. W. Evans, and some 10,000 copies were printed for distribution through the agency of the Cardiff "Western Mail." This finished our labors. Our total output was 300,000 of the British edition, about 50,000 in

Canada and the United States, 20,000 in Germany, 20,000 in France, 5000 in Holland, 10,000 in Wales, 8000 in Hungary, 5000 in Norway and Sweden, 3500 in Portugal, 10,000 in Spain, 5000 in Italy, and 5000 in Russia. There were editions in Tamil and Kanarese, the numbers of which I do not know. In all, I have seen twenty different presentations of my little book. The total sum at our disposal amounted to about £5000, of which, speaking roughly, half came from subscriptions and the other half was earned by the book itself.

It was not long before we had the most gratifying evidence of the success of these efforts. There was a rapid and marked change in the tone of the whole Continental press, which may have been a coincidence, but was certainly a pleasing one. In the case of many important organs of public opinion there could, however, be no question of coincidence, as the arguments advanced in the booklet and the facts quoted were cited in their leading articles as having modified their former anti-British views. This was the case with the "Tag Blatt" of Vienna, whose London representative, Dr. Maurice Ernst, helped me in every way to approach the Austrian public. So it was also with the "National Zeitung" in Berlin, the "Indépendance Belge" in Brussels, and many others. In the greater number of cases, however, it was unreasonable to suppose that a journal would publicly eat its own words, and the best result for which we could hope was that which we often attained, an altered and less acrimonious tone.

Mr. Reginald Smith and I now found ourselves in the very pleasant position of having accomplished our work so far as we could do it, and yet of having in hand a considerable sum of money. What were we to do with it? To return it to subscribers was impossible, and indeed at least half of it would

have to be returned to ourselves since it had been earned by the sale of the book. I felt that the subscribers had given me a free hand with the money, to use it to the best of my judgment for national aims, and I must apologize to them if I have not before now been able to give them some public account of what use it was put to. The fact is that it is only within the last few months that Mr. Smith has been able to get in the final accounts and bring the transaction to a close. It is my desire to give every information, which must be my justification in writing this rather personal article.

Our first expense was in immediate connection with the object in view, for we endeavored to supplement the effect of the booklet by circulating a large number of an excellent Austrian work, "*Recht und Unrecht im Burenkrieg*," by Dr. Ferdinand Hirz. Six hundred of these were distributed where they might do most good.

Our next move was to purchase half a dozen very handsome gold cigarette cases. On the back of each was engraved, "From Friends in England to a Friend of England." These were distributed to a few of those who had stood most staunchly by us. One went to the eminent French publicist, Monsieur Yves Guyot, a second to Monsieur Talichet of Lausanne, a third to Mr. Sumichrast, and a fourth to Professor Naville. By a happy coincidence the later gentleman happened to be in this country at the time, and I had the pleasure of slipping the small souvenir into his hand as he put on his overcoat in the hall of the Athenæum Club. I have seldom seen any one look more surprised.

There remained a considerable sum, and Mr. Reginald Smith shared my opinion that we should find some permanent use for it, and that this use should bring benefit to natives of South Africa. We therefore forwarded £1000

to Edinburgh University, to be so invested as to give a return of £40 a year, which should be devoted to the South African student who acquitted himself with most distinction. There are many Afrikander students at Edinburgh, and we imagined that we had hit upon a pleasing common interest for Boer and for Briton; but I confess that I was rather amazed when at the end of the first year I received a letter from a student expressing his confidence that he would win the bursary, and adding that there could be no question as to his eligibility, as he was a full-blooded Zulu.

The fund, however, was by no means exhausted, and we were able to make contributions to the Civilian Rifeman's movement, to the Union Jack Club, to the Indian famine, to the Japanese nursing, to the Irish old soldiers' institute, to the fund for distressed Boers, and to many other deserving objects. These donations varied from fifty guineas to ten. Finally we were left with a residuum which amounted to £309 0s. 4d. Mr. Reginald Smith and I sat in solemn conclave over this sum, and discussed how it might best be used for the needs of the Empire. The fourpence presented no difficulty, for we worked it off upon the crossing sweeper outside who had helped to relieve Delhi. Nine pounds went in tobacco for the Chelsea veterans at Christmas. There remained the good round sum of £300. We bethought us of the saying that the safety of the Empire might depend upon a single shot from a twelve-inch gun, and we devoted the whole amount to a magnificent cup, to be shot for by the various ships of the Channel Squadron, the winner to hold it for a single year. The stand of the cup was from the oak timbers of the "Victory," and the trophy itself was a splendid one in solid silver gilt. By the kind and judicious co-operation of Admiral Sir Percy Scott, the Inspector of Target Practice, through

whose hands the trophy passed to the Senior Admiral afloat, Sir Arthur Wilson, V. C., in command of the Channel Squadron, all difficulties were overcome, and the cup has been shot for this year, and has produced, I am told, great emulation among the various crews.

Our one condition was that it should not be retained in the mess-room, but should be put out on the deck where the winning bluejackets could continually see it. I learn that the "Exmouth" came into Plymouth Harbor

The Cornhill Magazine.

with the cup on the top of her fore turret.

Such is the history of the inception, the execution, and the results of a curious little incursion into diplomacy. Let my last word be of thanks, first to my partner in the enterprise, Mr. Reginald Smith, and secondly to all the contributors to the fund who encouraged me by their support. Their name is legion, and I have been unable to communicate with them individually as to the results of their enterprise. Perhaps they will kindly take this short statement as a sufficient explanation.

THE CHARITY OF WIDOW OGDEN.

Widow Ogden's stall was the neatest in the market-place. The linen cover was washed and bleached every week; and always—winter and summer—a posy of flowers, artistically arranged in a bowl of ancient lustre-ware, glowed amidst the piles of quaint silk handkerchiefs that she wove by herself on the loom which had been in her family for seven generations. How she contrived to make her fuchsias and geraniums bloom at Christmas none knew; for her only greenhouse was the long latticed window of her work-room. Two centuries ago her faculty for horticulture would have gained her the repute of a witch!

She was a meagre old woman, with a brown, wrinkled face. The daintiness of her French ancestors (she was a L'Estrange by birth), had endowed her with a curious precision in dress; and she was never seen—even in the most inclement weather—without a pure white muslin fichu on her shoulders, and a large cap with goffered frills.

Her married life with Jake Ogden, who had inherited the rough stretch of moorland known as "East Hillocks," had been uneventful enough. She had

worked quietly at her loom, day after day, whilst he, who had no knowledge of farming, had striven to win crops from the marshy ground, with so little success that after his death she found herself, save for the possession of the farm, no better off than before her marriage. She had borne one child, a boy who in his early youth had taken to a seafaring life, and had been drowned in the Channel on the first anniversary of his father's death. His neckerchief, one of her own weaving, had been sent home to her; it lay folded over the register page of her big Bible. One result of this loss was that she always inveighed against children leaving home; but notwithstanding, her thoughts of the lad always brought a high color to her cheeks and a proud ring to her voice; for he had died in attempting to save his captain's life. Over the press near the hearth a toy ship was preserved in a huge bottle of water: he had brought it for a souvenir of his first voyage.

Early in her widowhood she had ceased selling her wares to the hucksters and had hired the corner of the market-place, just beside the railings of